2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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rulers who sought to control her strategic position and fine natural harbours. Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Greeks and Romans successively occupied the islands. Although it is generally held that Malta and Gozo formed part of the Byzantine Empire, virtually nothing is known of this period of Maltese history. In A.D. 870 the Arabs occupied the islands. Two hundred years later they were replaced by the Normans under Count Roger. After the death of the last Norman king, Malta shared the fate of Sicily and passed successively to the Swabians (1194–1266), the Angevins (1266–1283), the Aragonese (1283–1410), and the Castilians. In 1530, Emperor Charles V handed over Malta and Gozo with their protesting inhabitants as a fief in perpetuity to the Sovereign Military Order of St. John of Jerusalem, a powerful body of celibate nobles vowed to helping the poor, caring for the sick and waging war on Islam. Napoleon drove out the Knights in 1798, and in 1800 Britain replaced the French. The islands were formally ceded to Britain under the terms of the Treaty of Paris in 1814. Since then they have remained a British possession.

The most important recorded event in Malta's early history was the shipwreck of St. Paul in A.D. 60.[1] During the three months he stayed in Malta, he is popularly believed to have converted the people to Christianity. Whether he converted many is a moot point, but it is a fact that he baptized the Roman governor, Publius, who became Malta's first Bishop. The Maltese are intensely proud of the apostolic origin of their religion. *Missierna San Pawl*, 'Our Father St. Paul', as he is usually called, is the principal patron saint of the islands, and the feast of his shipwreck is a national celebration. Not surprisingly, there are many local legends about him. One holds that the first people to heed his gospel were the villagers of Naxxar, and that his preaching there was heard by the people of Xewkija in Gozo.

The line of bishops established with Publius was broken during the long period of Moslem rule. Count Roger, however, re-established and endowed an episcopal see. He also helped to arrange other details of ecclesiastical organization which had lapsed while Malta was under Arab domination. The present line of Maltese bishops dates from this period.

Malta had a considerable measure of local autonomy during the Aragonese and Castilian periods. Public affairs were administered

[1] Acts 27 and 28.

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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by the officials of the governing body, or *Università*. This body, which met in Mdina, the old capital of the island, was composed of representatives of the nobles, learned men, secular priests, merchants and artisans elected by all the family heads in the towns and villages of Malta and Gozo. The Knights of St. John, however, severely limited the authority of the Università, and during their final years it was little more than a public corporation responsible for the importation of scarce foodstuffs.

The Order made itself responsible for local government. It controlled and financed the local militia, police, courts, water supply, public works, hospitals and charities. The government of the Order was highly centralized, and all key posts were held by Knights, though many of the lesser administrative offices were given to Maltese nobles, lawyers and clerks. The authority of the Order was made effective in the rural areas through the police and the ten Captains who were in charge of military garrisons and arsenals, located at strategic points for internal security and defence against war parties and corsairs, and were also responsible for mobilizing the militia. This paternalistic system of administration came to an abrupt end when Napoleon drove the Knights from the islands. Their departure marked the end of an era.

Napoleon remained in Malta only eight days, but they were busy days. According to Laferla, 'it is certain that no one in the space of a few days attempted more, did more and upset the Maltese more than he did.'[1] He set up a nominated council of Maltese to see to civil administration, remodelled the tribunals along French lines and established twelve municipal councils. He abolished the nobility. He closed the University, established a central technical college and founded fifteen government elementary schools. He also sent sixty sons of wealthy families off to study at republican colleges in Paris at their parents' expense.

'All this and probably much more would the Maltese have patiently tolerated,' says Laferla, 'had Napoleon not interfered with religion.'[2] For he set out to curtail the influence of the Church. He limited the jurisdiction of the Bishop to purely ecclesiastical affairs, ordered the expulsion from the islands of all non-Maltese clergy and reduced the number of clerics. He also instituted civil marriage, gave protection to the Jews and forbade

[1] A. V. Laferla, *The Story of Man in Malta* (3rd ed.; Malta, A. C. Aquilina and Co., 1958), p. 144.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 148.

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
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of the islands' military forces. The exception was the Right Honourable Richard More O'Ferrall, an Irish Roman Catholic Member of Parliament who had been a junior Minister in Lord Melbourne's Administration and was Governor of Malta from 1847 to 1851. O'Ferrall was sensitive, high-minded, well-intentioned and an indefatigable reformer; a Liberal by instinct, he gave Malta its first part-elected Legislative Council. But his very reforming zeal laid him open to bitter attacks and misrepresentation, which led to his premature resignation.

The experiment of placing a civilian and a politician in charge of Malta was held to have failed and was not repeated until 1946, when the Labour Government appointed a Socialist Member of Parliament in the person of Mr F. Douglas (later Lord Douglas of Barloch) as Malta's second civilian Governor. A new departure was made when Douglas was succeeded in 1949 by Sir Gerald Creasy, the first regular member of the Colonial Service to hold the appointment; yet another, when Creasy was succeeded in 1954 by Major-General Sir Robert Laycock. Although General Laycock is a distinguished soldier whose military career culminated in the post of Chief of Combined Operations during and after the Second World War, he had already retired from the Army before coming to Malta; his appointment was a civil one, not a revival of the military Governorship. So was that of Admiral Sir Guy Grantham, a former Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Station, who retired from the Navy immediately before succeeding Sir Robert Laycock in 1959.

2

Sections 2 to 4 of this chapter may be skipped by the reader not interested in Malta's constitutional vicissitudes between the restoration of self-government in 1947 and its temporary withdrawal in 1959. The book would, however,

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be incomplete without some record of these events. It is a complex story but I will endeavour to tell it as succinctly as possible.

On the 7th July 1943, while the war was yet raging and Malta still in jeopardy, the British Government had made a Declaration from which I quote the following paragraphs:

> His Majesty's Government have had under consideration certain representations which have been made by the elected members of the Council of Government in Malta, who have asked for an announcement regarding their intentions in relation to farther constitutional development. Since the present Constitution of Malta was inaugurated in 1939 the fortress has successfully withstood a siege of two and a half years. During the siege the Island was subjected to heavy and sustained attacks from the air and to a food shortage of increasing gravity. By their steadfastness and fortitude under the severe hardships thus occasioned, the people of Malta together with its gallant garrison rendered services of incalculable value to the allied cause. . . .
>
> For more than ten years, between 1921 and 1933, the people of Malta enjoyed full legislative and administrative responsibility under the Crown in the conduct of their national affairs, the control of naval and military Services and of all matters appertaining to the position of Malta as an imperial fortress, or otherwise affecting imperial interests or policy, being reserved to the Imperial Government. It is the policy of His Majesty's Government that responsible government in the same sphere should again be granted to Malta after the war.

After the conclusion of hostilities no time was lost in taking the first steps to implement this undertaking. In 1944 a National Congress representative of all the constituted bodies recognized by the Government of Malta prepared the way for a National Assembly, summoned to consider plans for a new Constitution to replace the so-called "MacDonald Constitution" of 1939. This in its turn had followed one

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of 1936, which superseded the original self-governing Constitution of 1921. In 1946 Sir Harold MacMichael, a distinguished retired administrator in the Middle East, was invited by the British Government to formulate detailed proposals for constitutional reform after consultation with the National Assembly. His recommendations[1] provided for a Legislative Assembly of forty members elected on a system of proportional representation and led to the re-establishment of self-government in September 1947.[2] But some responsible elements regretted that they made no provision for the Second Chamber or Senate which had existed under the Constitution of 1921.

The elections gave Malta the first Labour Government in its parliamentary history, under Dr (later Sir) Paul Boffa; this made way in 1950 for one formed by the Nationalists, whose earlier dismissal had led to the suspension of the Constitution in 1933.[3] The new Government was headed—for such are the vicissitudes of politics—by the veteran pro-Italian Enrico Mizzi, who had been interned in East Africa during the war and died in December 1950, three months after taking office. In 1951 his successor, the Nationalist Dr G. Borg Olivier, formed a Coalition with Dr Boffa's "Malta Workers' Party"; this Coalition remained in power until defeated in 1955 by the Left-Wing Labour Leader, Mr Dominic Mintoff,[4] a former Rhodes Scholar who had been Minister of Public Works and Reconstruction in the Boffa Ministry but seceded from his former chief in 1950.

Already in the time of Dr Borg Olivier there had been inaugurated a series of talks in London between the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Maltese Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition on proposed changes in Malta's

[1] Published in 1947 as Colonial No. 207 and analysed in the White Paper "Malta; Statement on Constitutional Reform (Comd. 7014) of Jan. 1947."

[2] See p. 137.

[3] See pp. 135–137.

[4] Mintoff is a variation of the name usually spelled Mintuf, which is the Maltese word meaning 'plucked.'